

Art Techniques

Student's Guides

Oil & Chalk

Pastels



Curated by
Ms. Mila Vasconcelos



Introduction:

Oil Pastels & Chalk Pastels

Vibrant color, expressive mark-making, and instant impact.

A guide to blending, layering, and creating powerful artworks with two of the most accessible drawing materials.

1. Overview

Oil pastels and chalk pastels are two of the richest, most expressive drawing mediums. They invite students to work boldly, explore color and texture, and create fast results with dramatic visual impact.

This guide helps you understand:

- The difference between oil pastels vs. chalk pastels
- How to layer, blend, and build depth
- How artists across cultures use pastel as a storytelling medium
- How to choose papers and surfaces
- How to avoid the most common pastel mistakes
- How to build IB-level artworks that balance technical skill and conceptual depth

2. Oil Pastels vs. Chalk Pastels – Quick Comparison

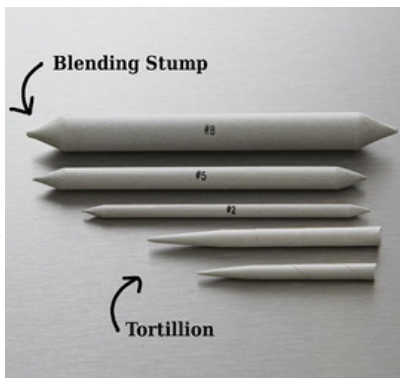
Feature	Oil Pastels	Chalk Pastels
Texture	Soft, waxy, buttery	Dry, dusty, velvety
Blending	Smudges with pressure, oil, or finger blending	Blends easily with fingers, stumps, tissues
Layering	Heavy layering, impasto possible	Light layers, smooth gradients
Surfaces	Smooth paper, mixed media paper, canvas	Sanded paper, pastel paper, textured surfaces
Finish	Bold, saturated, textured	Soft, atmospheric, light or dramatic
Fixative	Optional	Highly recommended



3. Materials & Surfaces

Oil Pastels

- Smooth Bristol paper
- Mixed media paper
- Canvas / primed boards
- Colored papers for contrast
- Tortillons (blending stumps)
- Baby oil / oil medium for advanced blending



Chalk Pastels

- Sanded pastel paper (best!)
- Canson Mi-Teintes
- Heavy drawing paper with tooth
- Fixative spray
- Cotton swabs, tissues, blending sticks



4. Techniques – Oil Pastels

A. Layering (3 steps)

1. Start with light pressure in base colors.
2. Build midtones with medium pressure.
3. Add final highlights or shadows with strong pressure.



Image Source: artdiscount.uk

4. Techniques – Oil Pastels

B. Blending with finger or stump

1. Apply colors side by side.
2. Press and “drag” colors to merge.
3. Reapply color on top for crisp details.

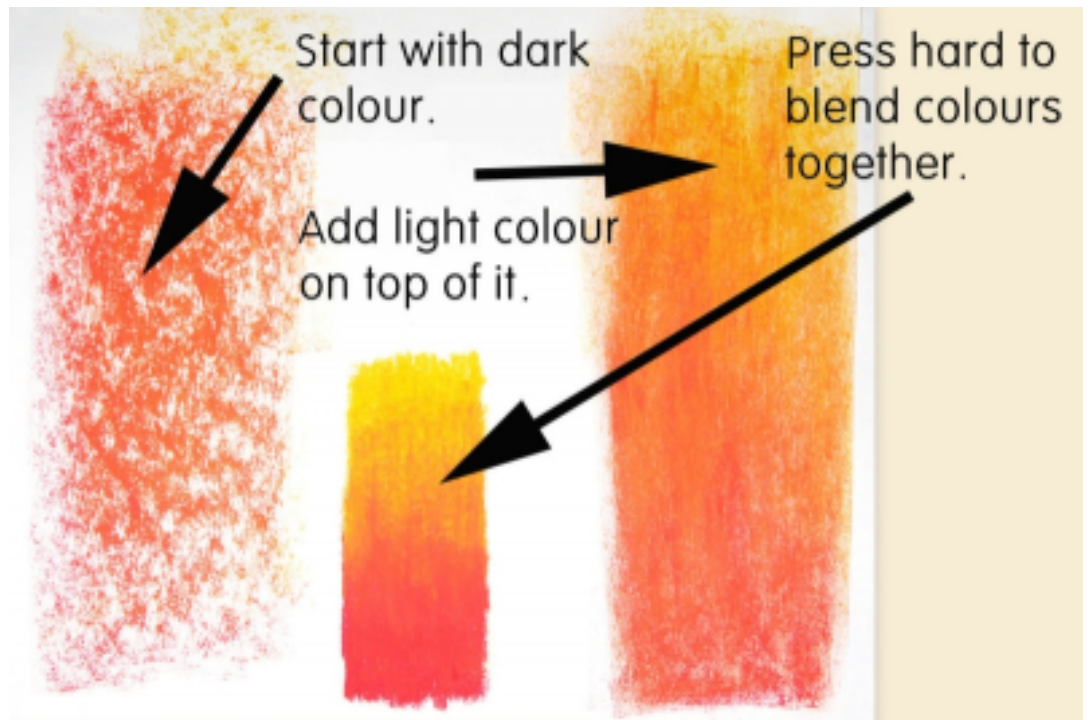
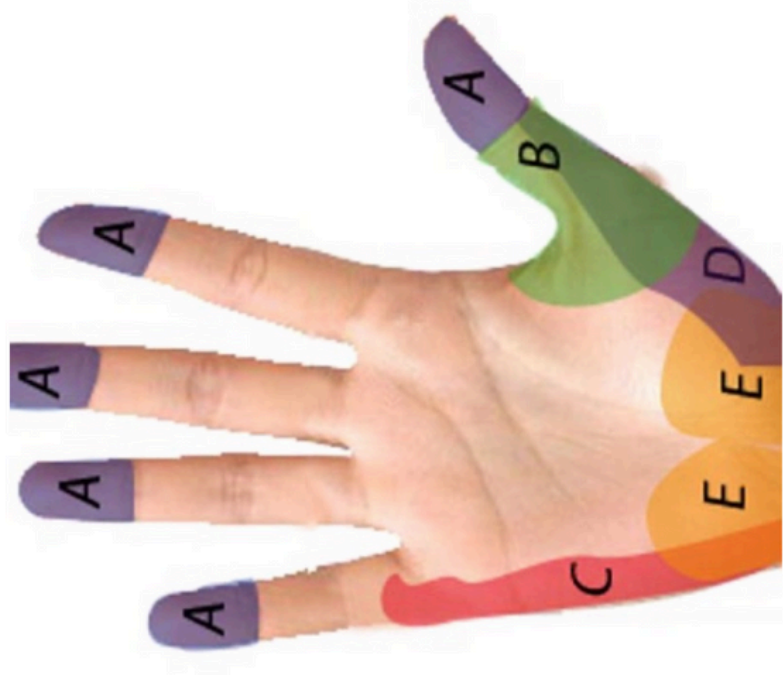


Image source: crayola.com



Image source: drawingfan.com



1. Blending and stumping dry pastels by hand

- A. Use the ends of your fingers to mix, stomp and blend colors. They allow you to do very precise work in small areas.
- B. You can make more sweeping circular motions with your thumb.
- C. The edge of your hand on the little finger side is good for quickly blending large areas.
- D. Use the edge of your hand on the thumb side for fan-shaped sweeps and to work on large horizontal areas.
- E. Use the two pads of your palm near your wrist for circular stumping.

Keep in mind: the moisture and light oily layer on your hand help to naturally fix pastels to the paper.

2. Mixing oil pastels

There are three possible methods:

- Once you have applied the colors to the paper, blend them by wiping a rag moistened with white spirit over that area. Then work on the blended, diluted colors with a paintbrush.
- Blend the colors with your finger to blur the contours.
- Use your fingernails to recreate clear separations.

4. Techniques – Oil Pastels

C. Sgraffito (scratch technique)

1. Apply 2-3 thick layers.
2. Scratch lines with a toothpick or needle tool.
3. Reveal contrasting colors underneath.



Images source: John Speight

4. Techniques – Oil Pastels

D. Impasto

1. Press heavy layers of pastel.
2. Build texture in strokes (like oil painting).
3. Leave thick marks for expressive details.



impasto oil pastel

Elena Malec



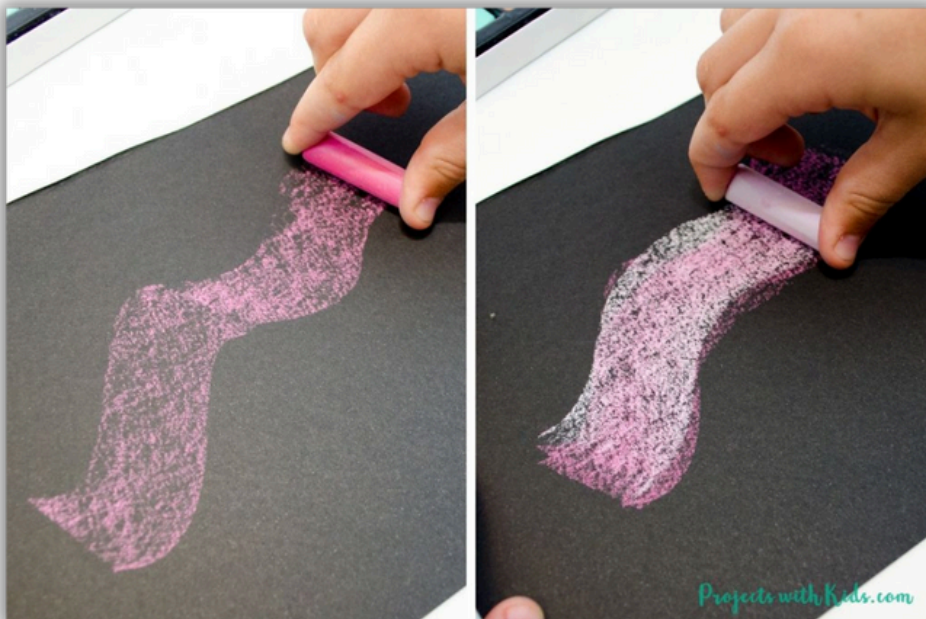
5. Techniques – Chalk Pastels

A. Layering (3 steps)

1. Start with light pressure in base colors.
2. Build midtones with medium pressure.
3. Add final highlights or shadows with strong pressure.



Image source: [Deep Space Sparkle](#)



5. Techniques – Chalk Pastels

B. Blending with finger or stump

- 1. Apply colors side by side.*
- 2. Press and “drag” colors to merge.*
- 3. Reapply color on top for crisp details.*



Image source:
projectswithkids.com

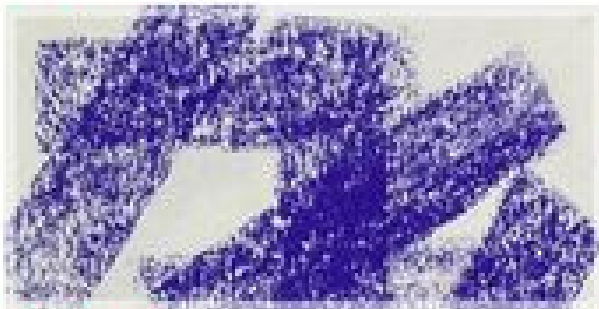
CHALK PASTEL TECHNIQUES



BLENDING



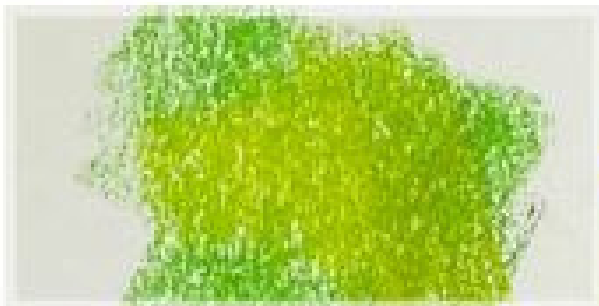
CROSSHATCHING



FLAT EDGE



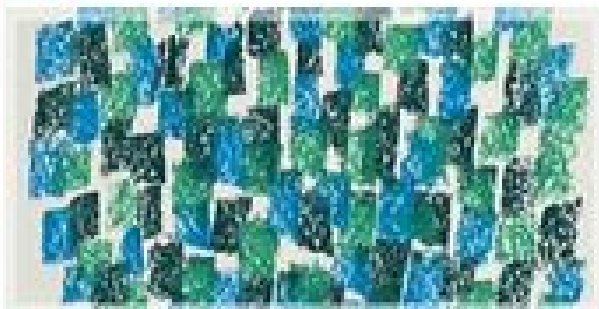
HATCHING



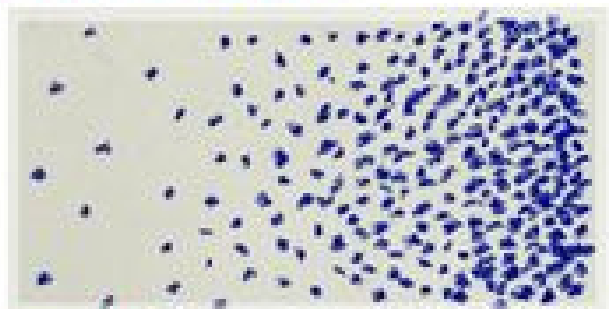
LAYERING



MASKING AND STENCILS



SHORT STROKES



STIPLING

6. Do's & Don'ts

Oil Pastels – Do's

- Do layer colors gradually.
- Do use firm pressure for vibrancy.
- Do work from broad shapes → details.
- Do mix colors directly on the surface.



Oil Pastels – Don'ts

- Don't use on thin paper (it will buckle).
- Don't try to erase mistakes (cover them instead).
- Don't overblend until everything turns muddy.



Here we can see a line between the colours.



These colours have been blended smoothly.

6. Do's & Don'ts

Chalk Pastels – Do's

- Do fix lightly between layers.
- Do use textured paper for best results.
- Do protect your workspace from dust.



Chalk Pastels – Don'ts

- Don't blow dust (tap it gently instead).
- Don't oversaturate early layers (leave room for blending).
- Don't use fingers too much – oils can stain paper.



7. Important Artists to Explore

Oil Pastels

- Henri Rousseau – vibrant imaginative landscapes



- Jean-François Millet – early pastel experiments



- Odilon Redon – expressive color + symbolism



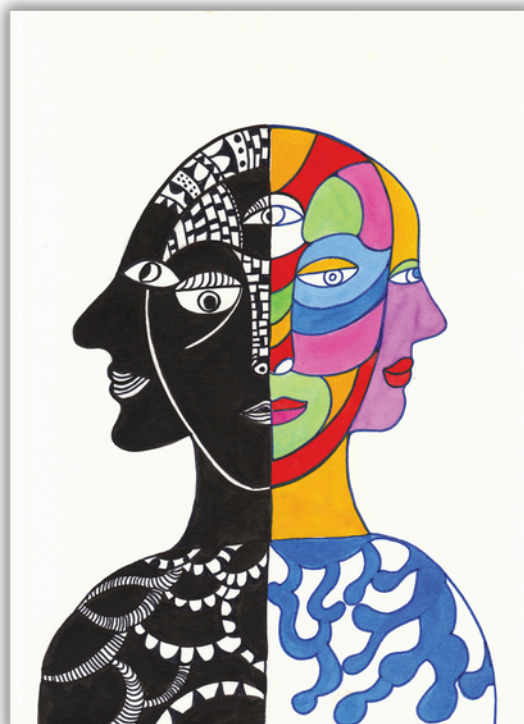
7. Important Artists to Explore

Oil Pastels

- Fernando Botero (Colombia) – saturated color in drawing



- Niki de Saint-Phalle (France) – bold graphic color



7. Important Artists to Explore

Chalk Pastels

- Edgar Degas (France) – ballet and movement



7. Important Artists to Explore

Chalk Pastels

- Rosalba Carriera (Italy) – pastel portrait pioneer



7. Important Artists to Explore

Chalk Pastels

- Zaria Forman (USA) – hyperreal glaciers and oceans



7. Important Artists to Explore

Chalk Pastels

- Jean-Michel Basquiat – expressive pastel drawings



8. IB-Aligned Project Ideas

1. Cultural Landscape in Chalk Pastels

Bright colors and focal point elements to capture the scene and tell a story.

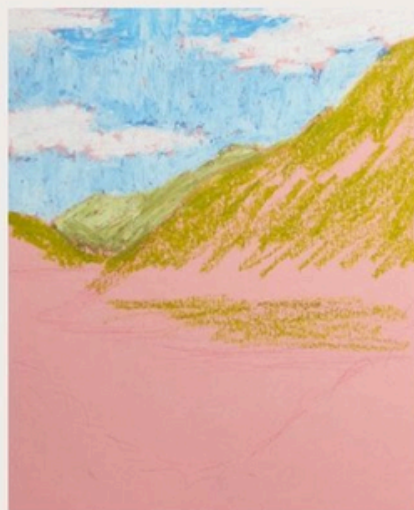


Image Source: Chalk Pastel Landscapes with William T. Campbell | Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art

Mini Challenge

OIL PASTEL TUTORIAL

HOW TO DRAW A LANDSCAPE



CHRISTIANAWALTHER.COM



8. IB-Aligned Project Ideas

2. Identity Portrait in Oil Pastel

Strong color + expressive mark making = symbolic self-portrait.

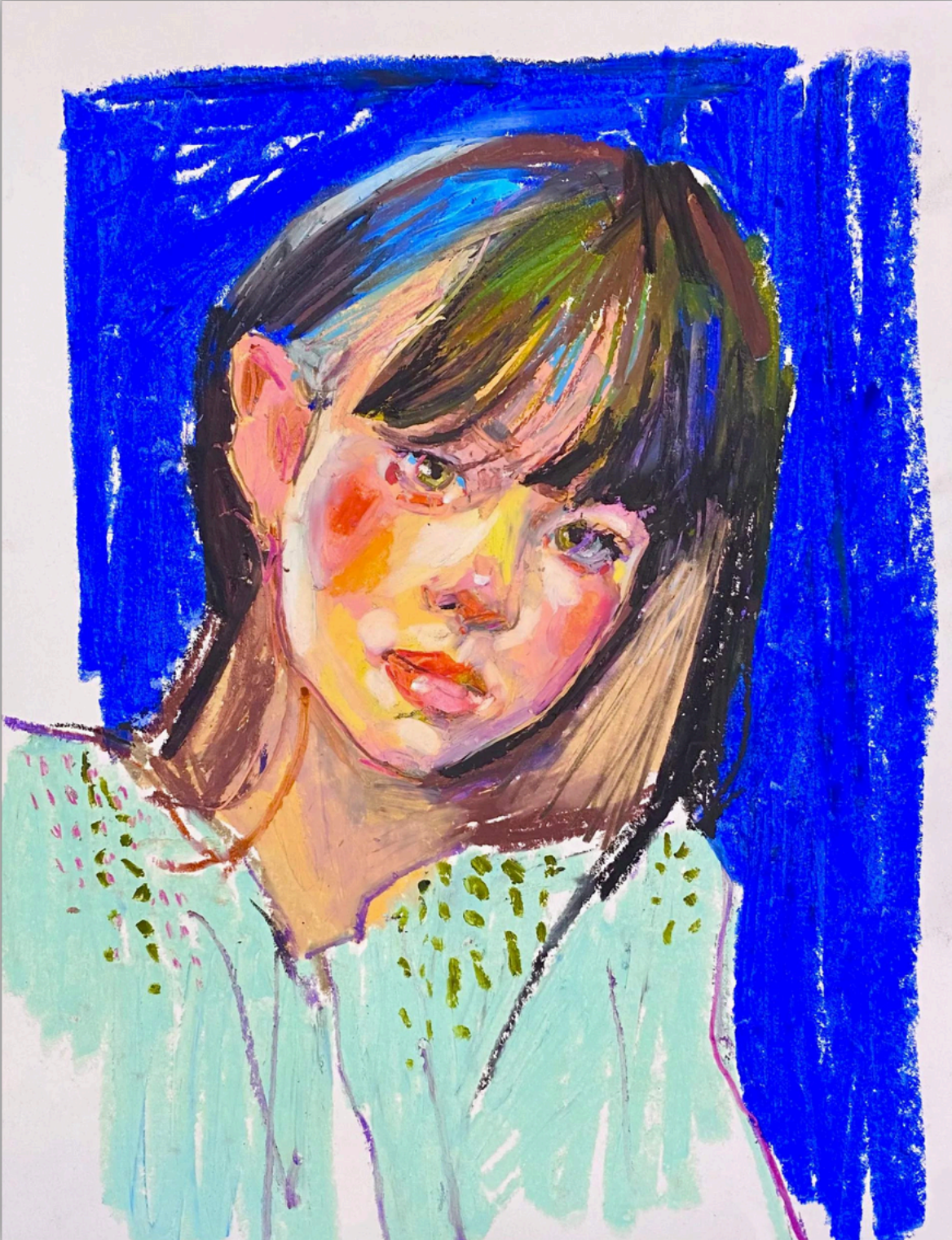


Image Source: Artist: Imhaenu

Mini Challenge

Oil Pastel Portrait Step-by-Step



8. IB-Aligned Project Ideas

3. Textured Cityscape (Oil Pastel Impasto)

Use thick layers to explore rhythm, movement, and chaos.



- Image Source: Artist: Ana Maria Edulescu

8. IB-Aligned Project Ideas

4. Memory or Dream Sequence (Chalk Pastels)

Blend soft edges + erased highlights for dreamlike mood.



- Image Source: Artist: Carol Kent

9. Mini Tasks

5 minutes

Two-color blend test (create smooth gradient).



10 minutes

Draw a simple object using only warm or cool colors.



15 minutes

Layer 5 colors to create shadows without using black.



30 minutes

Small landscape study using both blending and layering.



10. Final Message

Pastels are one of the most forgiving and expressive mediums you can work with. They encourage bold choices, quick studies, and emotional mark-making – but they also require control, layering, and understanding of color. Their strength lies in how direct and immediate they are: the pigment goes straight from your hand to the paper.

Use this medium to develop both your technical skill and your conceptual depth. Push color combinations, explore atmospheric blending, and express your ideas with energy and confidence.

-Ms Mila



